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Arabia



Resection of Fifth Rib—Busrah. Dr. Bennett, Mrs. Vogel, Miss Scardefield and Assistants.

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NEGLECTED ARABIA.

October-December, 1908.

A MONTH IN OMAN.

DR. C. STANLEY G. MYLREA.

It was a glorious sunshiny morning in the middle of March when we dropped anchor off the city of Debai. As soon as I had breakfasted Ameen, our colporter, informed me that the boat was ready. It was not without some regrets that I left the hospitality and civilization of the steamer. As I went down the side I realized that I was going to be alone in a strange country, that is, alone as far as having anything in common with any of my companions was concerned. However, we were soon busy counting our packages and making sure that everything was safe in our rowboat. I say, we, for the party consisted of Ameen, the colporter, already mentioned; Julius, our dispenser, and myself.



PEARL FISHING-BOATS DRAWN UP ON THE BEACH.

The boat was a typical native pearl-boat, such as they use in the shallow water diving before they go far out to sea. It was provided with a sail, but there being no wind, the oars were got out and with eight sturdy African slaves to pull we were soon cutting through the water at a fair rate of speed in the direction of Shargh, a town about

eight miles away, and our first objective. The rowers sang as they rowed, and their chant, with any amount of "Ya Allahs" scattered through it, became rather tiresome after a while. The sun also began to be rather hot, but after about two hours rowing we reached our destination.

Our host did not come to meet us in person, but sent his brother, who hustled about and saw that everything was right. Our host, Abdel-Latif by name, is in the employ of the British Government, acting as its representative in Shargel. He has built accommodations for a European guest, so I found everything fairly comfortable, an upstairs room to myself and a downstairs room for the two helpers, to say nothing of a bathroom! I was glad I had brought a bath. My room, moreover, was furnished—a bedstead, two tables and plenty of chairs. The meals, too, were not impossible. Breakfast consisted of bread, jam, and tea; lunch of rice and fish; supper, fish and rice. If a storm came up and the fishing boats were unable to go out, then rice without the fish. In between whiles, at odd times, a servant loafed in with Arab coffee. As a secret, which must not on any account be violated, let me tell you that I had brought a box of tinned things along, so occasionally we were able to make an addition to our table.

The first two days in Shargel were rather quiet owing to the fact that the son of a neighboring Sheikh had died and everyone was in mourning for him. After that people began to call thick and fast, both socially and professionally, although, as a matter of fact, there were very few social calls that did not terminate professionally. For instance, a man would drop in and we would chat for awhile. Then, just as he was about to leave, he would recollect some obscure pain somewhere or other and ask for treatment. Then, as likely as not, before I had finished writing his prescription, he would think of another disorder of an entirely different nature from which he had apparently been a sufferer for years. If I suggested that he was letting his imagination run away with him he would say, "Well! my eyes itch anyhow; put some drops in."

One young sheikh came to me with a fairly simple hare-lip, which needed an operation. I told him he must take chloroform and stay in bed a day or two, and, incidentally, pay a fee. He deliberated a few days and then said he could not take chloroform because there was wine in it, and that was forbidden in the Koran. It was idle for me to tell him that he was laboring under a delusion. A friend of his who was sitting by observed, "You don't mind gambling day after day, which is forbidden in the Koran, but here where you are asked to do something sensible you trump up silly objections." However, he never consented even though I offered to do the operation under cocaine.

Perhaps he was afraid of the fee. Fees this year have been hard to obtain owing to the scarcity of money consequent upon the dulness of the pearl market. So you see when you people at home don't buy pearls, we missionaries can't get our fees. But perhaps this is dangerous advice.

We spent a fortnight at Shargeh, treating all sorts and conditions of diseases. In fact, we had some 700 cases altogether. Sunday was our only day of rest, and on this day we absolutely refused to see any but emergency cases. After breakfast we would take a stroll out to the so-called "Gardens"—a sorry show—just date palms eking out an existence in the burning sand and never receiving any water save the little they may collect from an occasional winter shower. We would



A CORNER OF DEBAI BAZAAR.

look for a spot which had most pretensions to shade—the date palm is but a poor shade tree—and sit down to read, write, or talk. When the sun became too hot we would walk slowly home.

We had rather a miserable time going back from Shargeh to Debai. Perhaps because it was April 1st we did not take any rowers. Just as we got out to sea the wind changed. We were all day making the eight miles between Shargeh and Debai. When we reached Debai it was low water and we could not get over the bar, so had to heave to until about 2 A. M., when we crept in. No one was about, so we stayed in our boat till sunrise, and very soon found the way to our host.

Debai, like Shargeh, when it can, does a big business in pearls. There are simply hundreds of boats engaged in the pearl fisheries. It

is a much bigger place than Shargeh, and is situated on a desert where the sand goes over your ankles at every step. Even a shopping expedition is quite a tiresome process. The daily experience there was much the same as at Shargeh, and we treated about 750 patients during the fortnight we stayed there. We were not entertained quite so well, being all in one room, and that on the ground, so that the people stared in at us through the windows all day long.

With regard to evangelistic work, some hundreds of scripture portions were sold. We can only trust and pray that some of the seed fell on good ground. In Oman there is still a good deal of fanaticism. When we went out we were always hooted at, and the cry of Nasrani! Nasrani! (Christian, Christian) rang out from all sides. But, on the other hand, the door *is* open and the opposition could be lived down.

At last the day came round for the steamer. She had not been at anchor long before we and our belongings were aboard, and a few days later it was "Home, sweet Home."

BAHREIN PARISH LETTER.

REV. FRED. J. BARNY.

MUSCAT, July 1, 1908.

Why I should write a parish letter from Muscat about work at Bahrein may need a word of explanation. The right to do so is unquestioned, according to the appointment of the Mission placing the evangelistic and school work of that Station under my general supervision. Having but recently returned from there after a stay of nearly three months, there is also the qualification. There are two topics of which I wish to write in particular.

THE BOYS' SCHOOL.

My last task just before leaving was to preside at the closing exercises of the school. Hence, although this is not to be a yearly report, a few general remarks will be in order. The year has been one of solid growth. This showed itself not so much in increased numbers, though there has been a gain here, too, but in the nature of the attendance. All, except a few of the smallest children stayed with us the whole year. Nor were there any interruptions caused by opposition or epidemics. Day after day the "halls of learning" were open, teachers and scholars worked faithfully and there was steady progress right along. From last Annual Meeting on, a second teacher was employed during the afternoon, and since the great attraction, by means of which we hold the Moslem children in attendance, is instruction in English, I gave lessons each day to the two upper grades. As a result of all this the

examinations were really very creditable and the closing exercises were a fitting conclusion of a successful year.

The day set for them was not very favorable. Nevertheless, a good audience gathered, among them some of the more influential men of the place, including the vizier of the ruling Sheikh as his representative. We were rather anxious to get this kind of audience since there is still a great deal of prejudice against our school to be overcome. The Moslem children that we have belong to a few liberal and progressive merchants who are extremely anxious that their boys learn English. The bulk of the population is quite averse to any education, especially under Christian auspices. These exercises are a good means of advertisement and it was our object to make as good an impression as possible. Judging by the remarks of the visitors something of this was accomplished, and if half of the promises that were made of sending their sons are fulfilled there will not be room enough for the new scholars.

THE CARE OF CONVERTS.

A recent experience which cast us all into the greatest sorrow showed us what delicate plants of grace our converts are. One of them had been with us for several years and seemed to be "rooted and grounded" or, to change the figure, safe within the fold. Yet, one day he expressed dissatisfaction with his salary, and, as his demand for more was not granted, he left his work at the end of the month and the next thing we heard was that he had turned back to Islam. Envy and covetousness had made a sudden onslaught against him and he fell. Another man with his wife, only recently baptized, had been living unsatisfactory lives, showing too great intimacy with some former co-religionists, beside some other things. When faced with a certain irregularity, to put it lightly, he took offence, moved from our neighborhood into a house of one of the chief Moslems, and denied his faith. This all happened just before my arrival.

The problem of dealing with them with a view to bringing them back was complicated by money matters in a way which made it impracticable to make the first approaches. The best thing seemed to be to wait and pray. The first case seemed particularly sad because the man had made such good progress in the faith, whereas the boldness and crassness of his denial almost stunned one. Yet we could not give up hope; we felt that the root of the matter was in him and we steadied our faith on Christ's word, "and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." Nor were we disappointed. Gradually the wandering sheep came back. An encouraging sign was that one of our conditions, viz., open re-confession, as open as the denial had been, was at once

acknowledged. He began to attend services, so that at length I felt justified in having him make public confession, which he did before the whole congregation at Sunday service, confessing his sin and rededicating himself to the Lord Jesus Christ. The other case of man and wife has proved more difficult. His business affairs—he has a shop in the bazaar—are very much involved, and in contracting debts beyond his ability he has given others the handle upon himself. In these affairs the fear of man has proved stronger than the fear of God, so that little progress was made at my departure. Yet the news has since come that he has left his former associations and is coming to church again, and so hope revives.

Now I wonder what our clerical brethren at home think of all this? I wonder if any would have stuck to the law and excommunicated? What do you think of such converts, reader? No doubt, many will say, rather poor material. Yes, such they are. There is a poison sometimes administered in India that can scarcely be detected, but it works its way unto death by gradually sapping the vital powers. Islam is such a poison of the soul. “Dead in trespass and sin” is the consistent fruit of Islam, and the wonder is not that these converts are so weak, but that these dead ones have been brought to life so that they can repent, with all that that means. The thing to be learned, and it is a hard lesson, is that we cannot expect the same standards of the Christian life in these weaklings that we look for at home. Not that we in any way should lower the standard of morality—God forbid—or that we condone their weaknesses. But we must ever be ready with the largest charity to give the lift up, ever keeping wide open the door of repentance, nor despair readily if they fail us. They need our sympathy and prayers and let us give them freely, for through your prayers the grace of God will establish them and make them stand.

INFIDELITY IN ARABIA.

REV. JOHN VAN ESS.

1. Last February at Nasariyeh an officer in the gendarmerie sent word to me that he wished to have a private interview. At the appointed time he came, attended by the censor, a teacher in the government school and a clerk in the Turkish court. After the preliminary salaams the officer produced a paper in which were written the following questions:

- (a) Before God what?
- (b) Is the world eternal?
- (c) Define sin and spirit.
- (d) Is Revelation absolute or relative?

The discussion elicited the fact that he had drifted far from the old Islamic moorings, and, what was stranger still, his friends seemed to share all or some of his radical opinions. It is significant that men in their positions should openly avow such principles.

2. During the same tour my route lay near the camp of Sa'doun, a notorious brigand chief, who had a short time previously been pardoned by the Sultan and induced to come and collect the taxes from rebellious Arabs. After a short audience with Sa'doun I was entertained in the tent of his scribe. The latter was sitting at a table with a bottle of "arak" before him. To the accompaniment of numerous potations he began to air his views. He flatly denied the existence of a Deity, of judgment or of prophecy, while the other Arabs sat and smiled at his coarse jests.

3. While camping at Mu'amar with Mr. Dykstra last year a mullah frequently came to visit us. He had evidently been brought to doubt by a Babi friend, but when I saw him he had already "outbabbled" even him, for he freely admitted that Mohammed was only a sheikh of the Bedouin. The fast came on, but the mullah secretly yet eagerly came to our hut for dates and water.

4. At Amara, in August, a young Turkish official frankly admitted that the Koran is antiquated.

5. A friend of the latter, a Turkish civil engineer, often facetiously pities my simple faith.

6. A commander of troops publicly asked "Why are the English so powerful?" "Because they are so just," came the answer. "Then," said he, "I will be just, and will not trouble myself with ablutions, fasting and prayers."

In the Ashar mosque last June a Turkish official asked permission to address the worshippers at the Friday prayers. His subject was St. Paul. After sketching the course of the vengeful Saul, his peroration was as follows: "Oh, true, believers! if a glimpse of the living Isa could transform so fanatical a Jew as Saul, it behooves you and me to get a glimpse of Him too." We were gratified to learn that he had drawn his knowledge of Paul's life from a Turkish New Testament purchased at our shop.

A TRIP UP THE EUPHRATES.

REV. H. R. L. WORRALL, M. D.

How many would like to take a trip up the Euphrates river with us, or, rather, know how we take such a trip?

The first essential of course is 'to get the boat. Do you remember the size and shape of our boats in Busrah! They are long narrow boats, being propelled by men with long poles, sometimes with sails when there is wind enough and the journey long enough to pay for the trouble. A day or two before we wish to start on our journey we send out to inquire and secure a boat. At last, if our quest has been successful, we have secured a heavy, bulky and rather large boat, say 30 feet long by four feet beam. The length is divided into three parts—the fore, mid-ships and aft.



MISSION TOURING BOAT.

The middle part, barely wide enough for two to sleep side by side, is first covered with mats placed on top of arches stretching from side to side, the center of the arch about $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet high from the bottom of the boat. The frame of the arches is formed with branches of the date palm, from which the leaves have been stripped. The mats are made from reeds or water grass, which grows very abundantly in the marshes along the upper stretches of the Euphrates. The bottom of the boat, under the mats, is covered with the same kind of mats, and over this, possibly, a cheap rug. On top of this we place our bedding. At the foot of the bedding are placed the trunks and boxes which we may need on the journey.

Outside of this section, at the head of the bed usually, the boxes and materials are placed which will be needed at the journey's end. At the other end sits the servant, who cooks the food, rice, eggs and chicken, and makes the tea or coffee. Our cook stove is usually a box filled with clay or mud on which the fire is placed. In the fore-part the boatmen have their place to eat and sleep. During the day the boatmen, three in number, pole the boat or attend to the sail, eat and sleep at night. The space (center) about 3 feet 6 inches by 7 feet would be all the room one would have for a tedious journey of three, five, possibly more, days. We could not walk, as we could not stand up straight on account of the mats over our heads. We could only sit or lie down. Here we would eat our meals sitting on the rug with a box as a table.



BUSRAH HARBOR.

Our food would consist of rice and fat, which we buy before starting on the journey. If they can be purchased on the journey we have chickens and eggs. Milk is an uncertain quantity unless we stack up with a few tins. Meat—beef or mutton—none at all except as it may come from Chicago in tins. Our bread, after the loaves purchased before starting have disappeared, is the dry unleavened bread of the country. The tea and coffee are made from the muddy river water in which we are sailing. Our only dependable food would be the rice, fat and tinned goods purchased before starting. Reading, studying, talking and meditating form our usual pastimes during such a trip—

unless the weeping over smoke from the fires can be called a pastime. Thus for some five or more days we would be living the simple life.

THE ARABIAN MISSION.

TRUSTEES' MEETING.

The Trustees of the Arabian Mission met in regular session on Wednesday, September 23. Beside the Trustees and officers, the Revs. Cantine and Zwemer and Dr. Worrall were also present.

The appropriations for the calendar year 1909 were adopted, providing for an expenditure of \$21,838.19, in accordance with the estimates furnished by the Mission, but not including the sending to the field of any new missionaries who may be appointed during the year. These will be provided for later.

As the medical testimony seemed to show that it was not advisable for Mr. and Mrs. Cantine to return to the field at present, it was voted that they be granted an additional furlough in this country until October 1, 1909, in the hope of complete restoration to health.

The matter of the location of the new hospital, for which a donation of \$6,000 has been received, was thoroughly discussed. It was finally voted that it be located at Busrah, provided certain specific conditions can be met within eighteen months. If not, that it be built at the Muscat Station, should the Mission on the field approve.

The purchase of a piece of property at Busrah, with an addition, which the Mission hopes to secure for \$4,620, was reported and approved. About two years ago Dr. Zwemer was authorized to secure \$6,000 for this purpose. After raising nearly \$2,000 his efforts ceased, it being found impossible to secure the land for which the funds were sought. In view of this new purchase, which has been satisfactorily concluded according to reports from the field, Dr. Zwemer was authorized to renew his efforts to secure the full amount needed to complete the purchase, as stated.

In view of the fact that the agents of the Hamburg-American Line at Busrah had loaned to Mr. Van Ess three hundred pounds to enable him to complete the purchase, for three months, without note or interest, the cordial thanks of the Trustees were extended to them for their kindness.

The pledge of the First Church of Orange City, Ia., for the support of the Rev. G. J. Pennings as the missionary of that church in Arabia, for three years, with prospect of continuance, was acknowledged with the thanks of the Trustees.

Also the donation of \$500 from the American Bible Society for Bible work in Arabia.

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